

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 98

March 2, 1995, 2:19 p.m.
Page S-3314 Temp. Record

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT/Rejection

SUBJECT: A Resolution Proposing a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution of the United States . . . H.J. Res. 1. Final passage, as amended.

ACTION: JOINT RESOLUTION DEFEATED, 65-35

SYNOPSIS: Pertinent votes on this legislation include Nos. 62-63 and 65-97.

As amended, H.J. Res. 1, a resolution proposing a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution, is virtually identical to the balanced budget constitutional amendment that was considered last year by the Senate (see 103d Congress, second session, vote Nos. 47-48). The resolution will propose the following article as an amendment to the Constitution, to be valid if ratified by three-fourths of the State legislatures within 7 years of its approval by Congress:

- Section 1. Total outlays for any fiscal year shall not exceed total receipts for that fiscal year, unless three-fifths of each House of Congress shall provide by law for a specific excess of outlays over receipts by a rollcall vote.
- Section 2. The limit on the debt of the United States held by the public shall not be increased, unless three-fifths of the number of each House shall provide by law for such an increase by a rollcall vote.
- Section 3. Prior to each fiscal year, the President shall transmit to the Congress a proposed budget for the United States Government for that fiscal year, in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts.
- Section 4. No bill to increase revenue shall become law unless approved by a majority of the whole number of each House by a rollcall vote.
- Section 5. The Congress may waive the provisions of this article for any fiscal year in which a declaration of war is in effect. The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House, which becomes law.
- Section 6. The Congress shall enforce and implement this article by appropriate legislation, which may rely on estimates of outlays and receipts. The judicial power of the United States shall not extend to any case or controversy arising under this Article

(See other side)

| YEAS (65) | | | NAYS (35) | | | NOT VOTING (0) | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Republicans (51 or 96%) | Democrats (14 or 30%) | | Republicans (2 or 4%) | Democrats (33 or 70%) | | Republicans (0) | Democrats (0) |
| Abraham | Inhofe | Baucus | Dole | Akaka | Johnston | | |
| Ashcroft | Jeffords | Biden | Hatfield | Bingaman | Kennedy | | |
| Bennett | Kassebaum | Breaux | | Boxer | Kerrey | | |
| Bond | Kempthorne | Bryan | | Bradley | Kerry | | |
| Brown | Kyl | Campbell | | Bumpers | Lautenberg | | |
| Burns | Lott | Exon | | Byrd | Leahy | | |
| Chafee | Lugar | Graham | | Conrad | Levin | | |
| Coats | Mack | Harkin | | Daschle | Lieberman | | |
| Cochran | McCain | Heflin | | Dodd | Mikulski | | |
| Cohen | McConnell | Kohl | | Dorgan | Moynihan | | |
| Coverdell | Murkowski | Moseley-Braun | | Feingold | Murray | | |
| Craig | Nickles | Nunn | | Feinstein | Pell | | |
| D'Amato | Packwood | Robb | | Ford | Pryor | | |
| DeWine | Pressler | Simon | | Glenn | Reid | | |
| Domenici | Roth | | | Hollings | Rockefeller | | |
| Faircloth | Santorum | | | Inouye | Sarbanes | | |
| Frist | Shelby | | | | Wellstone | | |
| Gorton | Simpson | | | | | | |
| Gramm | Smith | | | | | | |
| Grams | Snowe | | | | | | |
| Grassley | Specter | | | | | | |
| Gregg | Stevens | | | | | | |
| Hatch | Thomas | | | | | | |
| Helms | Thompson | | | | | | |
| Hutchison | Thurmond | | | | | | |
| | Warner | | | | | | |

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

except as may be specifically authorized by legislation adopted pursuant to this section.

- Section 7. Total receipts shall include all receipts of the United States Government except those derived from borrowing. Total outlays shall include all outlays of the United States Government except for those for repayment of debt principal.

- Section 8. This article shall take effect beginning with fiscal year 2002 or with the second fiscal year beginning after its ratification, whichever is later.

NOTE: A two-thirds majority vote of Members present and voting in both Houses of Congress is required to pass a proposal to amend the Constitution. (Thus, if all Senators vote, 67 votes are required in the Senate.) If a proposal passes, then Congress must submit that proposal to the States for ratification. Congress may either ask the States to call conventions to ratify the proposal, or, alternatively, ask the States' legislatures to approve the measure. If three-fourths of the States approve a proposal, it becomes part of the Constitution.

Senator Dole initially voted "aye" but switched his vote to "nay" when it became apparent that the resolution was one vote short of passage. Switching his vote made him on the prevailing side of the question, which made it in order for him to move to reconsider the vote. He then placed H.J. Res. 1 on the calendar, and announced that the matter would be brought back up for another vote before the end of the 104th Congress.

Those favoring final passage contended:

H.J. Res. 1 will propose a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. This long overdue structural change will bring this Government back to the kind of fiscal reality and courage that it has failed to demonstrate for decades. In good years and bad, Congress and the Executive Branch have abandoned the tacit constitutional principle that budgets should be balanced. The Federal Government has gone on an orgiastic deficit spending spree, amassing a crushing debt burden for future generations to pay. The debt also causes considerable economic hardship now, and all Americans, especially the elderly, will endure immense misery if we allow our deficit spending to drive us into bankruptcy. The basic unsustainability of this reckless behavior has been apparent for years, yet every attempt to rein in the Federal Government's profligacy has failed. Some blame Congress, others blame the President, but all are to blame, and pointing at each other with dirty fingers will not help. We believe we are witnessing a systemic failure that works to preclude such courage. We need the systemic solution offered by this constitutional amendment.

This debate antedates our current fiscal crisis; in fact, it goes back to the drafting of our Constitution. The argument was raised that unless the Constitution clearly limited the ability of the Federal Government to borrow from future generations, a time would come when the legislature would find that it could meet the demands for greater spending and lower taxes by borrowing money from as yet unborn, and thus not voting, generations to pay. Most of the framers were students of history, and were aware that the Achilles' heel of democracy had always been deficit spending, so many of the Constitution's framers argued for a specific prohibition on borrowing. The most ardent opponent of deficit spending was Thomas Jefferson. In his words, "The question whether one generation has the right to bind another by the deficit it imposes is a question of such consequence as to place it among the fundamental principles of government. We should consider ourselves unauthorized to saddle posterity with our debts, and morally bound to pay them ourselves." This argument did not hold sway, not out of any disagreement with the principle, but because a majority of the Framers felt that the limited size and enumerated powers of government, the limits on the money supply created by a gold standard, the moral imperative of the "unwritten Constitution," and the House's exclusive power to originate bills raising revenue all would act to prevent the accumulation of debt.

For 150 years they were right. However, starting with the Great Depression of the 1930's, the restraints on deficit spending began to fall one by one. Until that time, Congress and the President found it easier to say "no" to requests for spending because of the common view that the size and the scope of Government were strictly limited by the expressed, literal declaration of the powers in the Constitution, and by U.S. monetary policy which was then anchored in the gold standard. However, the desperation of the American people and the willingness to experiment by elected officials changed Americans' view of their central Government. Deficits were proclaimed a beneficial fiscal tool, to be used for the Keynesian purpose of combating economic downturns, and, more importantly, the perceived role of the Government became both more expansive and less defined. (The efficacy of spending excessively to moderate the business cycle has been called into sharp question in the past couple of decades because for the past 50 years it has failed. In examining the history of countercyclical economic policies, most economists have concluded that the lag-time between the enactment of stimulus measures and the implementation of those measures is so great that they usually do not go into effect until after the economy has already recovered, and the economy is destabilized as a result. Even Lord Keynes, the father of countercyclical policy, conceded this fact before his death.)

In the 1960's the Federal Government began to deficit spend solely to avoid making hard budgetary choices. The slip had been gradual to this point, but a rapid expansion in the demands on the Federal Government led to an explosion in new spending. Not surprisingly, there was not a concomitant demand for new taxation, and, with the tolerance that had been building for debt and deficit spending, deficits began a rapid exponential climb. In the 1960's, deficits averaged \$6 billion per year; in the 1970's, they averaged \$38 billion per year; in the 1980's, they averaged \$156 billion per year; and so far in the 1990's they have averaged \$259 billion per year. Members and Presidents have been alarmed by the increased spending, and have attempted numerous legislative fixes, including

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Gramm-Rudman-Hollings I, Gramm-Rudman-Hollings II, tax hikes, rescissions, freezes, and spending caps. None has solved the structural problem. When these fixes got too tough, they were simply abandoned or ignored. The public wants increased spending, and it does not want greater taxes. Majority rule, through the ballot box, has upset the original constitutional principle that a transient majority has no right to burden posterity with debt.

No end is in sight to this continued excessive spending. The last legislative fix that was tried was in 1993, when President Clinton and Democrats in Congress passed a bill to reduce the planned deficits. (This package did not receive Republican support due to its reliance on immediate tax increases, with no real proposed spending cuts for several years). This fix was intended to create a dent in the projected deficits, but the fact that it only aspired to a partial solution is an indication that the problem is approaching the point that it cannot be fixed--for the first time, a "fix" was enacted that conceded long-term insolvency unless further actions were taken. The budget submitted by President Clinton this year takes no further action--in 10 years, it will add more than \$2.7 trillion to the debt. We will do our utmost to do better than President Clinton has proposed, but without passage of this balanced budget amendment his budget may actually be too optimistic.

Most of the deficit spending in the past 30 years has been on middle Americans, the voters. Many Americans are under the impression that foreign aid, welfare, and/or defense spending is to blame, but the real growth has been in entitlements. In particular, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Federal civilian retirement, and military retirement have grown rapidly. Those programs plus interest comprised 24 percent of our budget in 1963, in 1993 they comprised 56 percent, and, if present trends continue, they will comprise 69 percent by the year 2003. Defense spending has been roughly halved in the last 30 years, and domestic spending on other programs has declined slightly. The problem has been and continues to be in these so-called entitlements; Americans expect their Government to provide this money, but they are not willing to pay the full cost of providing it.

All of this debt is mortgaging our children's future. According to the National Taxpayers' Union, a child born today will have to pay over \$100,000 in extra taxes over the course of his or her lifetime in order just to pay the interest on the debt which will accumulate in the next 18 years. Additionally, for every \$200 billion in new deficit spending a child born today will have to pay an additional \$5,000 in taxes just to cover the interest charges. The tax burdens are so enormous, in fact, that projections are that a child born today will have to pay between 90 and 100 percent of his or her income in order to pay for the expected spending. No one, of course, will ever pay that much in taxes. These projected tax rates do not show that our children are going to be taxed unmercifully; they show something worse--that our projected spending is unsustainable and that our children are being given a country that will be unable to avoid bankruptcy.

The burden is not just on future generations. The debt is so large, \$4.9 trillion, that it is seriously harming standards of living now. Each person in America's share of this \$4.9 trillion is a staggering \$18,500. By 1999, under President Clinton's budget plan, the total debt will hit \$6.4 trillion with a per person cost of \$23,700. According to the New York Federal Reserve Bank, deficit spending between the years 1978 and 1988 reduced the growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 5 percent. The Congressional Budget Office informs us that each percent point of growth adds 600,000, so we therefore lost 3 million jobs due to deficit spending in just 10 years. According to the Concord Coalition, the debt and deficit spending have lowered family income tremendously. Without this burden, the Coalition concludes that the average family income would be \$50,000 instead of \$35,000. Additionally, for the Nation, all Americans should be concerned that between one-third and one-half of our trade deficit is to foreign debt holders. In fact, 25 percent of debt that is held by the public is held by foreigners. Payment of interest on the debt does not provide any service; all it does is act as a massive transfer payment from those average Americans who pay taxes to those rich individuals, 25 percent of whom are not even citizens of this country, who hold Treasury notes.

The most ominous trend is the rise in the cost of servicing the debt. The accumulation of this debt has rapidly increased the percentage of the budget that must be spent on interest. Gross interest on the Federal debt this year will be \$339 billion, next year it will be \$372 billion, and each year thereafter it is expected to rise still higher. Within a few years it will consume half of all discretionary spending. Interest on the debt, on our past excesses, is the only area of the budget that has grown faster since 1980 (120 percent) than entitlements.

Obviously it will be impossible to continue on this course. Even if we manage to muddle along for awhile by keeping the rate of growth in the economy ahead of the rate of growth in the debt, we will not be able to provide for the Nation's needs if nearly every penny in revenue is spent on interest payments and entitlement transfer payments. Those Senators who proclaim themselves to be liberals should be leading the fight for the passage of this amendment because without it every Federal social program in the country will be nonexistent within a few years. Those programs are already disappearing; Federal spending on housing has declined by 77 percent in the last 15 years, for example, and home heating assistance is down 30 percent over the same period. Liberals who think they are defending social program spending by opposing this amendment are thus really signing its death warrant.

Historically, when nations have had the type of debt burden which the United States now has, the result has been bankruptcy. The point of no return at which no economic policy is capable of staving off collapse varies. International relief efforts have stopped some countries from collapsing, but no funding source in the world is large enough to save the United States. On the other hand, the U.S. dollar remains the main international currency, which gives all countries a vested interest in propping it up. However, as Lester Thurow, one of the most respected economists in the world recently noted, if the United States does not stop deficit spending the question is not whether foreign lenders will stop buying U.S. Treasury notes, but when. If this amendment is not passed, instead of

having a balanced budget by 2002, we may be bankrupt. The only possible course for paying off the debt will be to monetize it, which means to promote rampant inflation by printing reams of worthless money. The debt will be "repaid," but the value of savings will be destroyed. Elderly Americans will especially be hurt by this action. Pension funds, and Social Security, will be worthless. Senators who claim to oppose this amendment out of concern for the Social Security program are playing a very dangerous game--their action is putting it at extreme risk.

On the other hand, economic projections if we pass this amendment are all positive. According to the General Accounting Office, if we balance the budget by 2002, the average American will have a real growth in income of 36 percent by 2020. The two most prestigious, non-partisan econometric forecasters in the country, Data Resources, Inc. and the Wharton School, also predict huge benefits. Data Resources predicts that passing this amendment will result in a 2.5 percent drop in interest rates, and the Wharton School predicts a 4 percent drop. Data Resources, Inc. further estimates that its projected 2.5 percent drop will lower interest payments by more than \$600 billion between now and 2002--in other words, even by its conservative estimate more than half of the deficit reduction that will be required to bring the budget into balance will be achieved simply by voting "yes" on this constitutional amendment. When the United States has had balanced budgets, interest rates have stayed around 3.5 percent. For average homeowners, this will mean a savings of \$500 per month on their mortgage payments.

We do not share our colleagues continued optimism that the Federal Government will suddenly begin to behave responsibly and balance the budget of its own accord. After deficit spending for 34 of the last 35 years, and after repeated failures to put our fiscal house in order, we believe the light of experience shows this optimism to be irrational. Those Senators who insist we already have the authority to behave responsibly totally misunderstand the purpose of this amendment. The amendment is not to give us the right to balance the budget; it is to take away the right we have assumed, contrary to original intent, to amass a crushing debt for our kids and grandkids to pay. This amendment is to stop fiscal child abuse. Our colleagues tell us, year after year, not to worry because the abusers have the option of stopping themselves at any time; we, however, do not think fiscal child abuse is an option that should exist. Senators need to face reality. Our political system promotes fiscal irresponsibility. We therefore need a structural change. We need to approve this constitutional amendment to balance the budget.

This amendment will help perfect representative democracy. It will put the general public interest in fiscal responsibility back on a level playing field with the special interests, making it more difficult to borrow and spend. The essence of this amendment is that it will finally restore the principle that the Government should spend no more than the people are willing to pay. It will achieve its ends by demanding accountability from Members and by requiring a broad consensus before the debt may grow.

The amendment will require each year's receipts to match or exceed outlays, unless three-fifths majorities in both Houses agree to deficit spend. Congress will be permitted to rely on estimates of receipts and outlays, but those estimates will be held honest by another provision of the amendment, which will require three-fifths majority votes in both Houses to raise the debt limit. We know that Congress can make reliable estimates, because it has steadily been able to predict within 2 percent its deficit targets for its budgets despite all the unforeseen economic circumstances that have occurred over the years. Thus, in practical terms, Congress will likely build a 2-percent cushion in each budget estimate to avoid having to make later corrections or to raise the debt limit. Additionally, no bill to increase revenue will be enacted unless approved by a majority of Members in each House by rollcall votes. Finally, the President will remain engaged in the budget process by a requirement that he submit a balanced budget proposal each year. This amendment will allow deficit spending, but it will make it far more difficult, and it will not be possible to evade its strictures by changing the law. Unlike any of our previous solutions, which we abandoned by rewriting the law when the choices became too difficult, we will not easily be able to rewrite the Constitution.

Last year when we debated an identical balanced budget constitutional amendment no amendments were offered. This year, we have spent one month of debate disposing of literally dozens of amendments. Some have dealt with constitutional questions, such as majority rule and minority rights, the advisability of putting statutory language (Social Security) into the Constitution, and the separation of powers doctrine. Others have dealt with policy questions, such as whether we should pass a 7-year tax-and-spending blueprint before passing this amendment, whether we should have a capital budget, and whether we should place Social Security off-budget. After a month of debate on these matters our colleagues are familiar with the arguments, so there is no point in rehashing them here.

However, two points must be made. First, every Senator who has lined up in opposition to this balanced budget amendment, making one excuse after another and insisting we do not need it because we can already control spending, is listed by the National Taxpayers' Union as among the most fiscally irresponsible Members of Congress. In fact, not one of the 33 Democratic Senators standing in opposition rates above a "D" on the National Taxpayer Union's report card on Members. When Americans see who has argued against H.J. Res. 1, they are going to consider the source. Second, we are only 1 vote shy of passing this constitutional amendment and submitting it to the States for ratification. The Senate has 11 new Republican Members, all of whom support passage. Additionally, several incumbent Democrats and Republicans who voted against it last year have decided to vote for passage. Counting the Senators who voted for this amendment last year who are still here, then, one would expect this amendment to pass easily. One would be wrong, though, because 6 Democratic Senators who voted "yes" last year have switched their votes to "no." These Senators voted for exactly this language in 1994 when they knew it had no chance of passing, and they bragged to their constituents that they were fiscally responsible enough to support it, but now that it appears that it will pass if they vote "yes" they have latched on to a

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variety of excuses for voting against it. Each of these 6 Senators will bear special culpability if H.J. Res. 1 is defeated.

The American people may not have all the details on why Congress is unable to balance the budget, but they understand that it cannot, and they understand that this inability is destroying the country. Consequently, more than 80 percent of Americans favor passage of a balanced budget amendment. In the last election, Republicans took control of Congress in large part because they championed the passage of this amendment. If Democrats take the message from this election that this is a "Republican" issue which they should consequently oppose they will be making a serious mistake. This issue has not been partisan before, and they should not allow their partisan instincts to take over now and defeat the last best hope for our Nation's future. We need only one vote--we need only one more Senator to show courage and vote to save the United States from bankruptcy. All the arguments boil down to one central question: Does the ability of the Federal Government to borrow money from future generations involve decisions of such magnitude that they should not be left to the judgments of transient majorities? We vote that it does.

While favoring the amendment, some Senators expressed the following reservations:

Argument 1:

We share some of the concerns of our colleagues who oppose this amendment, but on balance we believe that it is not so fatally flawed that we would be justified in blocking its submission to the States for ratification. This debate should not be locked up here in Washington, DC--it should be held in every State. We therefore favor passage.

Argument 2:

Congress will continue trying to pass a balanced budget amendment until it passes. Once it passes, it still will not solve the problem of continued deficit spending. To solve the problem, Members are going to have to cut spending. We need to put the distracting issue of this amendment behind us so that it will not consume time and energy that would be better spent on arguments over deficit-cutting measures. We therefore favor final passage.

Those opposing final passage contended:

Argument 1:

Rarely in all our years in the Senate have we seen a measure so flawed as the one before us today. This amendment will violate the principle of majority rule, violate the separation-of-powers doctrine, encourage budget gimmickry with the Constitution, fail to bring the budget into balance, raid the Social Security trust fund, weaken the economy, and result in massive cuts in assistance to the neediest Americans. Over the course of this debate we have offered numerous amendments to ameliorate the many manifest flaws in this proposed balanced budget amendment, though we never had any hope of making it acceptable. Our intent was not so much to amend H.J. Res. 1 as it was to expose its defects.

The first 182 years of our country's history resulted in an accumulated national debt of just under \$1 trillion. During the past 14 years, that debt has increased to \$4.9 trillion. During the 12 ignominious years of the Reagan and Bush Administrations, the national debt quadrupled. In one brief decade, aberrant fiscal policy decisions were made to amass debt; we must now adopt policy decisions to reduce that debt. The process was started by former President Bush in the 1990 reconciliation bill (which many believe cost him reelection) and was greatly expanded upon by President Clinton in his bold deficit reduction package of 1993. That 5-year, \$500 billion deficit reduction effort unfortunately did not receive a single Republican vote in Congress, but Republican votes were not needed because they were a minority in both Houses. Now that they are in the majority, instead of taking real action they have proposed this destructive balanced budget gimmick.

The first, and perhaps most serious, flaw in this amendment is that it will for the first time overturn the principle of majority rule. The budget of this Nation and immense economic decisions that relate to that budget could, at the most critical of times, be placed in the hands of a minority. During times of domestic or foreign economic crises, natural disasters, international turmoil, and recessions, which are the times that deficit spending is often necessary, minorities will exercise an undue influence over policy decisions. Decisions having to do with protecting the structure of government or individual rights deserve protection from majority rule, but fiscal policy decisions do not.

This constitutional amendment will also so blur and smudge the historical balance among the three branches that it will render our traditional constitutional structure to a mere shadow of its former clarity. If a deficit exists, the President will have unchecked impoundment powers. He will be able to make across-the-board cuts, rescind particular programs, or mandate that funding in particular States be cut. Constitutionally, Congress could not stop him. Also, the judiciary will become involved in making tax and spending decisions, depending on the degree to which Congress decides to permit judicial review.

After causing this structural damage to the Constitution, this balanced budget amendment will then cause further damage because

Members will inevitably attempt to evade its strictures. As evidence, we point to the experiences of the States, most of which have balanced budget amendments. Gimmicks that have been employed by the States to get around their constitutional balanced budget requirements include the creation of off-budget accounts, the postponement of payments to localities and school district suppliers, the delay of tax refunds, the deferment of contributions to pension funds, and the sale of State assets. When Members enact gimmicks to get around the Constitution the American people will become even more contemptuous of them.

One gimmick is already built into the amendment--Social Security surpluses will be used to mask the size of the deficit. The only debt that will be counted under the debt limit is that which is "held by the public." Debt that is owed to the Government, such as debt owed to the Social Security trust fund, will not be counted. Over the next 20 years Social Security will collect more than \$2 trillion in revenues to pay for the retirement of the "baby boomer" generation. Under this amendment, every penny of that \$2 trillion will be spent to balance the budget instead.

Other gimmicks to evade really balancing the budget will be inevitable because this constitutional amendment expressly provides that it will be permissible to rely on estimates of outlays and receipts in its implementation and enforcement. Members of Congress and Presidents have tended to be optimists in recent years, to put it as politely as possible. They have predicted greater revenues and less expenses than have occurred. Estimates have missed the size of the deficit by tens of billions of dollars. When estimates prove lousy under a balanced budget amendment, Congress will then have to scramble to come up with a three-fifths vote to fix the deficit and then again to raise the debt limit, or they will have to find a majority vote to enact a gimmick for an easy way out.

Though we do not expect that this amendment will result in balanced budgets, we do believe it will result in cuts in those programs that do not have well-heeled defenders to stand up for them. Once Social Security, defense, and interest on the debt are off the table, the portion of the budget with which we are dealing is rather small. Most of this remaining spending is in the form of State assistance, primarily for social welfare programs. Thus, when cuts are made in this rather small area of the budget, the poor and the disabled will be especially hurt. If our colleagues want to cut childhood immunizations, end Federal educational aid, eliminate the Food Stamp program, and slash home heating assistance, then they should vote for this amendment.

We will not. The American people believe that passage of this amendment will lead to a balanced budget, so many Senators may be tempted just to give them what they wish, but we urge them to reconsider. The American people do not understand the damage this amendment will cause to the Constitution; they do not know that it will not lead to a balanced budget; they do not know the harm that it will cause to the economy and to needy citizens.

The Senate was largely created to exercise leadership for the good of the country by withstanding the tides of popular passion. One hundred ninety years ago today, Aaron Burr, before leaving the Senate Chamber for the last time, gave a speech the closing words of which were the following: "This House is a sanctuary--a citadel of law, of order, and of liberty; and it is here--it is here, in this exalted refuge--here, if anywhere, will resistance be made to the storms of political phrensy and the silent arts of corruption; and if the Constitution be destined ever to perish by the sacrilegious hands of the demagogue or the usurper, which God avert, its expiring agonies will be witnessed on this floor." These words should ring in the ears of all Senators as they cast their votes.

Argument 2:

The balanced budget amendment is a gimmick. Senators need to cut spending, especially entitlement spending, to balance the budget. They do not need to amend the Constitution. The last election brought Republican control of both Houses, and dozens of new fiscal conservatives, so we are confident that we will succeed in cutting spending. We pledge to work with our colleagues to restrain spending in the ensuing years, but we cannot in good conscience vote for this constitutional amendment.